

Lesson 7: Teach Sunday School



Lead Children To God's Truth

Create a Welcoming Environment

Teach to the Audience

Close the Sunday School Session

Introduction

The surprising joy of teaching Sunday school is that your own faith will grow by leaps and bounds. You are blessed as you study God's Word, enriched as you share it with children, and privileged to see genuine, child-like faith each week. The relationships you build will last a lifetime. Though children grow, they will always remember you and think of you as "their" Sunday school teacher. They will see you as someone who is invested in their lives. It is an honorable and high calling.

But the calling to teach children is a little different. Jesus gives an extra burden to those who teach children, *"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea"* (Matthew 18:6).

There is responsibility here to get it right.

Don't be afraid of this responsibility, but be diligent in your studies and faithful to the Word of God. Don't take the task lightly. Children have open hearts and will believe what you teach them. The earlier lessons in this module are essential in knowing how to study Scripture. You cannot add your own thoughts or ideas.

Before you agree to teach Sunday school you should assess whether you have the time to study and prepare for class. Consider whether you have a love for children and a passion to teach. Assess the need—have you been asked to teach preschool students or eighth graders? Is the need a good fit for your abilities? Are you familiar with the joys, challenges, and communication style for those age students? Accept the position with joy and confidence that God will work through you. It is a great honor and high calling.



Responsibilities of Your Pastor and Sunday School Superintendent

Your pastor and Sunday school superintendent will work together to lead the Sunday school program. They will consider the needs of the students, select the curriculum for the year, and set the schedule.

The schedule will likely include the dates that Sunday school will be held (start, end, and holiday schedule) as well as Christmas service plans and the Sundays selected for singing (optional).

There may also be a structured schedule to follow each week that could include an opening or closing devotion, and possibly time for music. This will help you manage your time in the classroom.

If there are enough teachers, it is very beneficial to have alternating schedules where teachers teach one week and are able to attend adult Bible study on the alternate weeks.

This training will help you understand the unique needs of various age brackets. The charts in this lesson help you see the goals for students at each level. Understand the needs of your class so you can recognize their abilities and struggles—adjust your teaching accordingly. Each age level is very different.



Teaching Resources

Become familiar with the Sunday school curriculum resources!

The curriculum material is filled with ideas for every level. There are songs, ideas, Bible passages, and well-written questions. (Those are important!) Become familiar with the resources available to you!

Many activities in the curriculum are timeless.

One important goal is to proactively help parents stay involved in the spiritual growth of their children at home. Many parents struggle to provide spiritual training and send their children to Sunday school with the intention of delegating that responsibility to you as a Sunday school teacher. With a loving spirit, you can help the parents see how Sunday school can be a spring board for family discussions and devotions. Encourage parents to read the lessons again with their children and review memory work together at the dinner table. Remind them often how easy it will be to use the materials and resources from Sunday school in their own homes. Tell the children to ask their parents to review the lessons and help them with their memory work. Encourage the children to find a place to hang up their Sunday school lesson sheet or project to continue conversations at home.

CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Imagine the joy in a child's heart when they walk into their Sunday School classroom and see their teacher with a warm smile, happy heart, and a personal welcome! It is a wonderful moment to cultivate—don't rob them of it because you need to be in the office making copies of the lesson at the last minute.

It is really important to be prepared for Sunday school before you walk into the classroom—it is for any sort of teaching. But Sunday school teachers should plan to be prepared and ready at least 15 minutes prior to starting the lesson. You need to have the Sunday school classroom ready, copies of the lessons, and all the materials you need so you don't have to leave the classroom. Once the children start coming in they shouldn't be left alone—that's part of a safe environment.

If the room is being used for something prior to Sunday school, you may want to plan a few extra minutes in case you have to pick up the room, straighten chairs, or remove other distractions. Don't forget to grant the same courtesy to whomever uses the room after you—make sure things are picked up.



Have Cell Phone Numbers for Every Parent

Have every parent's telephone number (husband and wife) with you or in the room. If someone suddenly says "I feel really sick," you can send a text to that mom or dad to come get their child. There may be something else that happens where you need to reach parents immediately.

Keep those numbers handy or enter them in your phone!

Be Prepared for Class: Preschool-Kindergarten

Children will start arriving 10 minutes before Sunday school starts so make sure you have everything in the classroom. Preschool children cannot be left alone. You have a very small window before class so you need to really be on your game and ready to go!

Children at this age interrupt with excitement. When you start talking about Jesus on the donkey, you will likely have an exuberant student that has actually seen a donkey (and another student who has been to the zoo...)! Be sure you understand age-appropriate behavior and social skills for your students.

Hopefully you are using something as a tool to teach the story like Popsicle sticks with character cut-outs, a felt board (which can be labor intensive!), or another visual aid. Some ideas will be offered in the curriculum, like building a wall with blocks when they learn about Jericho.



The Use of Manipulatives

Manipulatives are physical objects that are used as teaching tools to engage students in hands-on learning. They can be used to introduce, practice, or remediate a concept. Manipulatives and teaching aids help reach students with visual and tactile learning styles.

Be prepared to tell the story with a visual aid or manipulative and have it ready to go. You may prepare a place for the younger children to hear the story. And hopefully, if you have room in in the area that you're teaching, you'll set up a different area for a craft. It would be ideal if you could have the areas separated somehow so the children can come right to the place where they will learn the story. Then they can go to a different area for the craft. If you do have a separate area for the craft or activity you will also be able to set it up in advance so it is ready to go. Not every room will be suitable for a set up like this—work with what you have but think about how to use your room space wisely.

Be Prepared for Class: Grades 1-2

First and second graders are probably not ready to read directly from the Bible, so you will likely use a summary lesson or worksheet. Have the copies of the lesson ready. You may have a Scripture or hymn verse that you want to put on a board.

If you are acting out the lesson in some way, you want to have those props ready to go after you teach the lesson.

Make sure your craft or activity project is also ready to go.

Be Prepared for Class: Grades 3-4

Third and fourth graders will likely read right from the Bible, so you want to have Bibles out and ready for the students.

If the class is working on a hymn verse, you would want that on the board. That is a great way to start the class.

Be Prepared for Class: Grades 5-8

To create a warm environment with older students, ask each student to share one good thing and one bad thing from their week. The student's responses will give a good indication of what is going on in their life. It helps you stay in touch with their age level and gives you insights about how to apply the lesson to their personal lives. You may have an opportunity to pray with them at the end of class if there are personal concerns.



Activity: Create a Welcoming Environment

It's your turn to Create a Welcoming Environment.

Step One: Where will you look to find visual aids or manipulatives to assist you in teaching little ones? Does the church have things you can use or will you need to find those on your own?

Step Two: When will it be most convenient for you to make the copies you need for Sunday school? Will you be able to get into the building? Do you know how to use the copier?

Step Three: Find three Psalm verses that would offer encouragement or comfort to older students who are struggling with anxiety or loneliness.

TEACH TO THE AUDIENCE

Sunday school curriculums are written to fit specific ages and help you plan the lesson in a way that reaches your audience.

Teach Students in Preschool

At the preschool (non-reading) level you are telling the story, they are not reading it. It's very important to keep things clear and simple, but be prepared for interruptions. While you are telling the story you want the kids are engaged so they may interrupt because they are excited about something. Go with it. Don't worry at this age if they're interrupting unless it is excessive. Otherwise, just go with it and answer the questions—be prepared for that.

After you tell the story, allow the children to participate in retelling the story. Your goal is to have the students repeat the very basic parts of the lesson. After craft time or singing, ask the students to tell the story again. "This is what happened...can anybody help me tell the rest of this story?" They retell it. Then they are really getting into it. You tell it first and then they help you retell it.

Age	The Children	Teacher's Needs	Key Expectations	Goals
Preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unable to sit for long periods of time -Often interrupt -Very likely this lesson is new to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be patient - Come up with multiple activities to keep children interested - Able to explain things in simplest terms - Be excited about the Word! - Be excited to see the children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sing a song or start class with a rhyme - Teach personal space: we don't touch others; We all stay in our spots - Need to walk quietly from one place to another - When singing in front of church, fold hands or put at your side - When singing in church don't touch your neighbor or wave to someone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God is awesome! - God loves me! - Jesus died for my sins - Children can repeat very basics of lesson to parents

Teach Students in Kindergarten-Grade 2

At the kindergarten to second grade level, you will have pre-readers and emerging readers. Most Sunday school curriculums will have a summary lesson for this age group.

The story summaries are an important part of teaching the lesson, and you want to have copies of that for all the students. Go through the lesson, and if the students are able to read, have them participate by reading paragraphs. If the students do all the reading it will take much longer to get through the lesson. You may want to read alternate paragraphs with your students to get through the lesson more quickly. Just make sure they are participating to the best of their ability.

Keep things simple (not quite as simple as preschool) with age-appropriate words, props, and activities. The students in this age bracket are more familiar with learning, but it will still need to be simple.

Most importantly, be alert to any words that might seem big. You wouldn't use a word like "covenant," but if there is a new word, you need to introduce make sure you are ready to explain it to the children. The summary lesson won't include too many big words, but you should watch for them while you are preparing the lesson.

Age	The Children	Teacher's Needs	Key Expectations	Goals
K-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some not able to sit for entire hour -Differing levels of reading ability -Lessons still very new to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Keep things simple -Lessons are a summary -Don't use words that will complicate the lesson -Be patient with beginning readers -Look ahead and don't give struggling readers long paragraphs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sing a hymn verse to start the lesson. This cues the children that class is starting. - Tell children how long you expect them to sit—read the story and then we'll get up and move around - When singing in church make sure everyone can hear your words - Pair older children with younger for singing to help follow the music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am a sinner. I don't always do the right thing - God is almighty. He can do anything - Jesus died for my sins. He is my Savior - Jesus provides for all my needs - Children repeat lesson for parents - Memory work from the lesson to do at home

Teach Students in Grades 3-4

You can assume that most children in third grade can read right out of the Bible. The reading level should be suitable in most situations but sometimes this will be the first time children are actually reading directly from a Bible. Make sure the students know where you're at and can follow along. Your personal preparation time will alert you to new or difficult words. You may need to stop a few times while you are reading to explain and introduce things. This is a great age to introduce maps. Show students a map of Israel—point out the borders and show them where the story is taking place. Help them become familiar with key areas and important land marks.

Age	The Children	Teacher's Needs	Key Expectations	Goals
Grade 3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most children are good readers - Family is still the primary place for information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain concepts, that are new to children - Names and places may be new so be willing to explain - Children like hands on and action, draw concepts on a board - Write definitions on the board - Maps are useful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give class a tangible cue to start class or sing a hymn - Read the lesson from the Bible - When child not behaving, stand next to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All the foundational blocks, plus applications to life - Applications around playground, bus, siblings, parent expectations - Parental inclusion carries a lot of weight - Encourage parents to work on memory work and review lesson at home

Teach Students in Grades 5-8

By the time you get to fifth grade, the children will start to be comfortable and somewhat familiar with the Bible. You will be able to develop more of the Bible lesson and teach them how it applies it to their lives. Connect them to Scripture. Everything in the Bible is written for a reason—teach them to ask, “What is God teaching me and why does he want me to know this?” Students can reflect, “What difference does this truth make in my life?”

The Sunday school curriculum usually includes deeper discussion material for students in this age bracket. There are many teacher’s notes and tools for the leaders. There will be good discussion questions, examples, and applications for you to use. You may also want to study the text in a commentary such as the *Bible History Commentary* by Werner Franzmann (there are three volumes) or the *People’s Bible*. Talk to your Sunday school superintendent about accessing those resources.

Age	The Children	Teacher’s Needs	Key Expectations	Goals
Grades 5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looks/bodies are changing - Identity may be at odds with what they learn at church and the way they are treated at school and among peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Important to remind children of their identity in Christ as a saved child of God - Bring out the common blessings all Christians have but also that God created each of us uniquely with different gifts and abilities - Be an encourager who can build up the children - Willing to use additional commentary to add points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acknowledge early on that the lesson may be one that is well known, but we are going to take it deeper and figure out how it applies to our lives - Acknowledge that we aren’t all great singers but singing praise to God is something all Christians do - Do not allow put-downs. Remind children that in God’s house we build each other up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All of the above, but applications will be about peers, phones, parents, teachers, sports - Should be able to identify with people in the lesson - May not be forthcoming with parents about lessons (7-8 especially) so the goal is to touch the child’s heart and have them think back to the lesson throughout the week - Able to memorize on their own, especially with parent’s encouragement

It is very important to note which students might struggle with reading or paying attention. There are many physical conditions such as ADHD or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome that reduce a child's ability to focus, concentrate, or sit still. Hopefully the parents have already talked to you. Take time to understand how to accommodate them. Talk to your Sunday school superintendent or find out what you can do (or not do) to help. The child may find something like a stress ball beneficial or you may let them walk around the table a few times and then return to their seat.

At this level there aren't crafts or additional activities. Spend all your time studying the lesson.

Here is the complete chart for Sunday School teachers:

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Preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unable to sit for long periods of time -Often interrupt -Very likely this lesson is new to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be patient - Come up with multiple activities to keep children interested - Able to explain things in simplest terms - Be excited about the Word! - Be excited to see the children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sing a song or start class with a rhyme - Teach personal space: we don't touch others; We all stay in our spots - Need to walk quietly from one place to another - When singing in front of church, fold hands or put at your side - When singing in church don't touch your neighbor or wave to someone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God is awesome! - God loves me! - Jesus died for my sins - Children can repeat very basics of lesson to parents
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Activity: Teach to Your Audience

It's your turn to Teach to Your Audience.

Step One: What are the key goals for preschool students?

Step Two: Why might it be important to transition students from lesson summaries into reading directly from a Bible?

Step Three: Is your church able to provide Bibles to children who don't have a Bible or will the parents be expected to purchase one?

CLOSE SUNDAY SCHOOL WITH PRAYER

The end of your Sunday school class time will likely follow the schedule set by the pastor and/or Sunday school superintendent. The entire Sunday school may come together for a closing devotion or music time. Other students are dismissed directly from their classroom.

Children may have a song or hymn they have been working on that you want to sing before you dismiss the children. Songs or hymns may be sung at music time or toward the end of your Sunday school class time.

Parents or an older sibling should pick up the younger children so they are not left wandering around trying to find their family. Hopefully the parents will come so you have a moment to say hello and build that relationship—even if it is just a warm smile and quick greeting. Your Sunday school superintendent will likely set the standard for dismissing children.

At the close of your time with your Sunday school students, pray with them.

Close Sunday School With Prayer for Preschool-Kindergarteners

Prayers with preschool children and kindergarteners will be very simple. “Thank you Jesus for teaching us today... Bless us this week...” These may be the only extemporaneous prayers the children hear. Model simplicity and sincerity.

Close Sunday School With Prayer for Grades 1-4

Prayers with children in grades 1-4 develop over time.

Tie the prayers to the Sunday school lesson or Scripture verses you studied with the children.



Prayers Tied to Scripture Lessons

The Sunday school curriculum likely has printed prayers for you to read. These prayers include the key applications and truths of the lesson for children to remember.

You may also review those prayers and then write your own prayer or just pray from your heart.

You could also ask the children if they have any prayer requests. They pick up on what is going on around them and may be confused or concerned about something. Children at this age are often very willing to share what is on their heart and mind. It may be a health issue in their family or a problem in the country/world they have heard about. Remember to include prayers of thanksgiving and prayers for God's blessings.

Close Sunday School With Prayer for Grades 5-8

In grades 5-8, you have already asked the children about their week and noted what concerns they have. Prayer time at the end of Sunday school is the ideal place to address those concerns. You may also ask if there are any prayer requests from the children. Pray for a grandparent who is ill, a student who is struggling with a particular class at school, or something that is happening in the country. Don't embarrass the child by talking about their problem, but help them see how God's people bring their concerns to him in prayer.

Prayers of thanksgiving are also important if children have shared special joys. Prayers should also be tied to the Scripture lesson you studied—or even a particular Bible verse or phrase that is especially meaningful.



Activity: Close Sunday School With Prayer

It's your turn to Close Sunday School With Prayer

Step One: Write a prayer to close Sunday school for younger students after a lesson on Daniel in the lion's den.

Step Two: Write a prayer for a student's grandmother who is sick and in the hospital.

Step Three: Refer back to the three Psalm verses you selected to comfort an older student who has some anxiety. Write a prayer that incorporates the comfort of those verses.

Your Turn to Teach Sunday School

It's your turn to Teach Sunday School

Review and Exercises

Items flagged with arrows require action on your part. If you are uncertain how to proceed, reread the appropriate section in this lesson.

Create a Welcoming Environment

- Find three Psalm verses that would offer encouragement or comfort to older students who are struggling with anxiety or loneliness.

Teach to the Audience

- Why might it be important to transition students from lesson summaries into reading directly from a Bible?

Close Sunday School With Prayer

- Write a prayer to close Sunday school for younger students after a lesson on Daniel in the lion's den.

